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Dear Paul:

I note from the morning papers that the Department is embarking on a program to induce the requisite number of other governments to join in a United Nations action naming the Chinese Communists as aggressors and looking toward the imposition of sanctions along the lines of an economic blockade and possibly a uniform non-recognition policy.

The passage at which we have now arrived is so terrible, and the dangers so great, that I feel moved to write this letter at the risk of redundancy. The line of policy suggested by these press reports is precisely the line which I meant to warn against in the statements I made when I was recently in Washington. If that was clear to the Secretary and the rest of you, then I really have nothing more to say, for then my view is already known and understood, which is all that I can ask. For the event, however, that there should have been any unclarity about my feelings on the subject I put forth the following thoughts.

I think it a terrible mistake to continue to try to use the United Nations as a vehicle of United States policy in the Korean matter, or to continue to increase or intensify in any way its involvement in that matter. I have never felt that it should have been involved from the beginning, for the Korean question is not a moral or a legal one, but a political one between ourselves and the Russians arising from the defeat of Japan. In any case, I think our aim should be at the present time to get the United Nations out of it as fast as possible, and under no circumstances to increase their involvement. We have a basic disagreement with our allies over Far Eastern policy which we, inhibited by internal political pressures, are unable to do anything about resolving. The more we press for further United Nations action with respect to China the more we are going to highlight this element of disunity before the world and risk the defection of our United Nations Assembly majority in circumstances where it might be politically disastrous. The United Nations cannot help us or save us in this Korean situation; but by insisting on pushing it ahead of us we can damage our own cause and do great damage to the entire principle of international organization.

As for the sanctions mentioned above, I cannot tell whether the Department is really thinking along these lines, but I can conceive of nothing more futile. If there is any one thing which the past has adequately demonstrated, it is the futility, and foolishness, of trying to

punish a government by either economic blockade or non-recognition, when the enforcement of that punishment depends on an uncertain coalition. An attempted economic blockade will not be fully enforced, will give rise to frictions and suspicions and evasions on the part of the members of the coalition, and will not, however successful, eliminate communist power in China. Non-recognition as a coalition measure will not prove an effective political weapon and will eventually play into the hands of the communists. I am not advocating United States recognition, for which I do not feel that the necessary prerequisites exist. But I would strongly oppose letting our own policy in this matter be tied down by pointless and ineffective international arrangements, as we did in the case of Spain.

Our choices in Korea are only two: If we can stabilize a front long enough to put real pressure on the Chinese Communists by harassing their lines of communication and making their position thoroughly awkward and uncomfortable, then we should do that and negotiate both themselves and ourselves out of the peninsula on the best terms possible. If we cannot do that, then I think our best course is to leave voluntarily, motivating our departure by saying that it no longer serves any useful purpose to try to re-establish the power of the South Korean Government in Korea when (and I am using here the words which President Cleveland used with reference to Spain's power in Cuba in his message to Congress in 1896) "a hopeless struggle for its reestablishment has degenerated into a strife which means nothing more than the useless sacrifice of human life and the utter destruction of the very subject-matter of the conflict". In such circumstances, I think we can only call upon the world to note that the effort of the United States, and the United Nations if you will, to assure the orderly establishment of an independent and representative government in Korea had been frustrated by the political and military operations of the governments of the Soviet Union and China on Korean territory, that those two governments had succeeded in creating a situation where the people of Korea could be saved from foreign domination only by the sacrifice of those things which would give to independence its meaning and its purpose, and that it remains only, for the time being, for the free world to take note of the cynicism and ruthlessness with which we have been confronted in this instance and to draw from this the necessary conclusions as to what to expect from communist power and what dispositions must be made for the long term, in the light of that fact.

As for the Chinese Communists, we cannot hurt them now in the short run. It is in the long run that they will need us; and if we are consistent in remembering and digesting the lessons of this disastrous episode, the day will come when we can give them cause to regret their arrogant and provocative action. For the moment, the worst punishment we can inflict upon them would be to leave them strictly alone with themselves and with their Russian associates and with the problem of a Korea abandoned to their joint mercies (for the territory once abandoned by ourselves and the United Nations can hardly fail to become a bone of contention between them). We will not be able to <u>create</u> the opportunities for settling our score with the Chinese Communists, but those opportunities will <u>arise</u> in the normal course of events. It will then behoove us to be astute enough to see them, and consistent enough, in our determination to

redress this damage to our prestige and to the cause of stability in Asia, to take advantage of those opportunities with the requisite determination and force.

In 1881 Commodore R.W. Shufeldt, digesting in his own mind his experiences in trying to open up Korea by agreement with the Chinese, wrote the following passages to a friend in the Senate at home:

> "Six months residence in this city, the political center of the Chinese Government, and an intimacy rather exceptional with the ruling element, has convinced me that deceit and untruthfulness pervade all intercourse with foreigners; that an ineradicable hatred exists, and that any appeal across this barrier, either of sympathy or gratitude, is entirely idle. The only appeal or argument appreciated is force....All sympathy will be construed into weakness, all pity into fear.
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> "The United States standing, or endeavoring to stand, upon a higher plane than that of mere physical force, pursues in China a policy of moral suasion which neither convinces nor converts the Chinaman to the doctrine of common brotherhood of men or nations -- for high as the heavens are above the earth, so high is his conceit; as deep as the waters of the sea is the measure of his contempt for the "outside barbarians".
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> "Any high moral ground in the field of diplomacy -- any appeal to the motives which ordinarily govern nations -- indeed, any argument unaccompanied by the outward and visible sign of force, is used only for the purpose of delay, which in the end is equivalent to victory. Yet the United States has interests in China destined in the future to be greater than those of any other nation....Our policy should therefore be positive and governed, to the extent of the moral law, by American interests alone, and followed up by the argument which they understand -- the argument of force, pressure, not persuasion."

I suggest that if we were to leave Korea we should consent to recognize, though belatedly, the validity of Shufeldt's views for our policy in that part of the world.

Very sincerely,

George Kennan

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